

Meet the Teacher

KEITH ABRAHAM

1. How long have you been practising and what lead you to start?

I've been practising the Internal Arts for seven years now. I started shortly after I left the military, while I was working for an investment bank in London. I was struggling to heal from my combat experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and felt myself unravelling. I resorted to the Internal Arts almost as a last chance and I'm very glad to say that it paid off.

2. What does tai chi mean to you?

Tai Chi and my other Internal practises provide me with space and time allocated to my own benefit and healing. I am only responsible for my own movements, employing the appropriate principles of breathing...There's no place for me to concern my mind with paying the bills or other external responsibilities. It is a practise for me to focus all my attention on and reap the benefits accordingly. It is also a practise whereby I heal myself from my physical, emotional and psychological traumas and so it is profoundly important to me.

3. What is the most important aspect of the practise for you?

I believe that so long as I employ the appropriate principles and continue practising and progressing, the Art itself will give me whatever I require at that stage of my development. So, I just keep practising... So long as the principles are in place, it's really just important to continue practising.

4. Who or what inspired you? Who inspires you now?

My own trauma and suffering inspired me to start training. I was in a very difficult place and I remain very grateful to these Arts for healing me to the degree they have. Now, I'm inspired to progress in the spiritual aspect of the practise, but I am also inspired by my students and their own healing journeys and experiences. Their hard work and witnessing the benefits they are reaping is incredibly inspiring and rewarding.

5. Do you have any personal goals in tai chi?

I intend to continue my healing journey although I feel I have made significant progress already. More than I could have ever dreamed of, to be honest. In addition to progressing further along the spiritual path, a big goal for me now is to introduce it to my former colleagues in the military and finance industry because I'm aware of just how much many people in those communities could benefit from a practise like Tai Chi.

6. What do you think of tai chi's current popularity?

I believe the Internal Arts as a whole will continue to rise in popularity and I'm excited by that

prospect. I'm wary of it turning into an industrial complex like Yoga seems to have but I believe it is still a net positive and therefore to be supported. There are excellent teachers of these Arts out there and so I believe the knowledge will continue to be retained and shared in a healthy way.

7. Where would you like tai chi to go in the future?

I would like to see schools adapt more of the practises. It's important to introduce these benefits from an early age so we arm our societies with the tools needed to process difficult experiences and emotions in a healthy way and to maintain healthy bodies, too. As I mentioned before, I would love to introduce more Veterans and my former colleagues in the City to Tai Chi and the Internal Arts, too.

8. As a teacher, how do you feel about the martial aspects of the art?

I focus less on the martial aspects of Tai Chi, for sure. But I will always explain the application when introducing a movement. It definitely helps students understand what they are doing, at least mechanically. But then that same physical structure will also prompt and promote the other benefits that we can take from the practise, so I believe it is important, yes.

9. How do you feel about competition in the art?

I've successfully competed at the last two London Tai Chi Competitions but am now in a place where I believe the true benefit of competition is found only in the lessons our partner teaches us through our shared and combined practise. Competing against scores is no longer of interest or benefit to me.

